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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 71/NO. 13 APRIL 2, 2007

‘Convict all five cops who killed Sean Bell!’

Say protesters after 3 N.Y. cops indicted



Militant/Willie Cotton

March 20 protest at Manhattan’s Union Square demanding prosecution of all five cops who killed Sean Bell, a young African American worker, in a hail of 50 bullets.

BY DAN FEIN AND OLYMPIA NEWTON

NEW YORK, March 20—Three of the five cops responsible for the November 25 shooting death of an unarmed Black man surrendered here yesterday after being indicted on charges ranging from first-degree manslaughter to reckless endangerment.

About 120 people rallied in Manhattan today to demand justice for Sean Bell, 23, who was killed in a hail of 50 police bullets as he left the Queens nightclub where he had celebrated his bachelor party. Many protestors demanded indict-

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U.S. officials: ‘long war’ lies ahead in Iraq

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, March 19—In a televised address from the White House today, on the fourth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, President George Bush reiterated his administration’s stance that a victory for Washington in Iraq is central to its long-term fight against “terrorism.” Bush said the initial results of deploying 28,000 more troops to Iraq were encouraging but “the new strategy will need more time to take effect. And there will be good days and there will be bad days ahead.”

Just before Bush’s speech, White House press secretary Anthony Snow said, “This is going to be—the term has been used before—a long war. . . . I don’t think anyone is trying to hide the fact.”

Meanwhile, Democrats in Congress continue to promote a bill that calls for a “phased withdrawal” from Iraq while approving billions for the wars there and in Afghanistan.

In his brief address, Bush reiterated the U.S. rulers’ main rationale for their multi-theater “war on terrorism,” from Iraq to Afghanistan, Somalia, and the Philippines. He said “terrorists” seek a safe haven from which to carry out attacks like 9/11.

Bush stressed that the U.S.-led crack-

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700 protest ‘migra’ raid in Massachusetts

BY BILL ESTRADA

NEW BEDFORD, Massachusetts, March 17—More than 700 people packed the auditorium of the Greater New Bedford Vocational High School here today for a spirited rally in solidarity with workers facing deportation after being arrested on March 6 by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

Speakers, who were seated under a large banner reading, “Release the Families. Stop the Deportation,” included clergy, immigrant rights activists, union officers, and two spouses of arrested workers. Relatives and children of those grabbed by *la migra* also sat on stage. After the auditorium filled to capacity, about 100 people held an impromptu rally in the lobby.

The brutal arrests of 361 workers, mostly women from Guatemala and El Salvador, by some 300 armed ICE agents at the Michael Bianco Inc. leather factory have sparked protests, church vigils, and rallies.

“We’re here with the families that belong in our state,” said Corinn Williams, Director of the Community Economic Development Center of New Bedford, one of the organizations providing assistance to the arrested workers and their families. The majority of the speakers condemned the arrests and the

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Help ‘Militant’ expand readership

Contribute to paper’s $100,000 fund drive

LETTER TO READERS

Dear reader,

I urge you to join supporters of the *Militant* to increase the paper’s readership! Take part in the *Militant’s* subscription drive, which begins March 31 and lasts for eight weeks, ending May 27. Help in signing up 2,500 new readers. While introductory subscriptions are the focus of this circulation effort, sub renewals count too.

During the same period, the *Militant* is carrying out its semi-annual fund drive to raise $100,000 to meet operating expenses—from printing and shipping to sending reporters around the world. The *Militant* depends on your donations, and your efforts to solicit contributions from others, to keep coming out weekly and to improve its coverage and reach.

At the heart of these campaigns is the expansion of the paper’s readership and financial support among the working class *and* in the number of workers, youth, and others who actively take part in bringing these efforts to fruition.

Members of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists in the United States and sister organizations in other countries have been among the *Militant’s* most consistent distributors and contributors.

A growing number of other workers and youth, however, have been joining efforts to sell *Militant* subscriptions and use the paper politically on the job, and beyond. Many more can do so. The success of this circulation campaign and

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8,000 Mississippi shipyard workers strike for better pay

BY PAUL MAILHOT

PASCAGOULA, Mississippi, March 17—About 8,000 workers are in their second week on strike here against the Northrop Grumman shipyard. “We are asking to be treated fairly, and we are very determined,” said J.D. Dupree, on the picket line today.

Dupree and fellow strikers Johnnie Moffett, Richard McDougall, and Shirley Pearson were eager to tell their story to the *Militant*.

The company, which builds and repairs ships for the U.S. Navy, has made two contract offers to the 15 unions representing the shipyard workers. They have turned down proposals “overwhelmingly, by landslide votes, each time,” said Moffett.

Workers say the company is offering inadequate pay raises, an unacceptable

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D.C. marchers: ‘No to Iraq war!’

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, March 17—Some 15,000 people marched to the Pentagon today, the fourth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, to demand the withdrawal of U.S. troops from that country. Impeachment of president George Bush was a central theme advanced by the organizers and others present.

The march, which drew participation mostly from East Coast and Midwest cities, was called by Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (A.N.S.W.E.R.), a coalition whose steering committee includes the Party for Socialism and Liberation—a group that split from the Workers World Party—as well as other organizations such as Pastors for Peace and the Nicaragua Network.

A larger than usual prowar counterprotest was organized by a group called Gathering of Eagles. Around 2,000 people, many veterans of the Vietnam War, lined the street near the beginning of the antiwar march.

Among the featured speakers at the peace rally were former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark; Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey was killed in action in Iraq; Michael Berg, whose son

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Home loan defaults rattle Wall Street

BY PAUL PEDERSON

The slide in the U.S. housing market is causing tremors on Wall Street as mounting home foreclosure rates spur more dips in the leading stock indexes.

A survey, released March 13 by the Mortgage Bankers Association, revealed that 0.54 percent of home loans entered foreclosure in the fourth quarter of last year—the highest rate in the survey’s 37-year history.

Many of these defaults are from working people. Because their income, net worth, and credit rating were low, many workers were lured—on the promise of ever-rising home values—into borrowing at exorbitant interest

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Also Inside:

Anti-Black column in ‘AsianWeek’ widely protested

BY NORTON SANDLER

SAN FRANCISCO—A racist column by journalist Kenneth Eng, headlined “Why I Hate Blacks,” published in the February 23 issue of the *AsianWeek* newspaper, was widely denounced at a March 2 forum here that featured a panel of editors and journalists from several of the Bay Area’s newspapers oriented to the Asian and Black communities. The forum was held in San Francisco’s Chinatown at the office of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance.

Eng, a 22-year-old New York–based writer, had a regular column in *Asian-Week* titled “God of the Universe.” In the article that provoked an immediate uproar, Eng wrote, “Blacks hate us. Every Asian who has ever come across them knows that they take almost every opportunity to hurl racist remarks at us.”

“Contrary to media depictions,” Eng continued, “I would argue that blacks are weak-willed. They are the only race that has been enslaved for 300 years. It’s unbelievable that it took them that long to fight back.”

“Blacks are easy to coerce,” Eng wrote. “This is proven by the fact that so many of them, including Reverend Al Sharpton, tend to be Christians.”

In recent months, Eng had also written columns for *AsianWeek* headlined, “Why I Hate Asians” and “Proof That Whites Inherently Hate Us.”

Immediately after Eng’s column appeared in print, a storm of criticism was directed towards *AsianWeek.* The paper immediately pulled the column from its web site. Many Asians in the Bay Area were among the first to respond with outrage. Among those quoted in a February 27 *San Francisco Chronicle* article on the controversy was Ling-Chi Wang, retired chairman of the ethnic studies department at the University of California at Berkeley. Wang said there is an urgent need for Asian Americans to be aware of U.S. history and know that Asian American gains have come largely as a result of the efforts of Black people.

AsianWeek’s editor announced February 28 that Eng had been fired. The paper that day issued a public apology for publishing the column.

Ted Fang, *AsianWeek*’s editor-at-large, told the audience of 65 at the March 2 forum that the publication of the article set back the work of Bay Area civil rights organizations.

Willie Ratcliff, publisher of the *San Francisco Bayview,* told the forum that Eng had his facts wrong on everything he said about Blacks. “What about Toussaint L’ Ouverture and the struggle for freedom in Haiti?” Ratcliff asked. “Eng is ignorant about the hundreds of revolts by slaves in this country. It’s important for us to know the truth about each other’s history.”

After the journalists made brief presentations, the floor was opened for discussion. Among the more than 20 people who made brief comments was Milton Chee, a San Francisco rail worker. He noted how U.S. government acts of discrimination directed against Asians—like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882—helped reinforce Jim Crow segregation against Blacks. Chee added that the U.S. government’s ban on allowing Asian immigration into the United States was reversed in the 1960s as a result of the civil rights revolution.

In its March 2–8 issue, *AsianWeek* devoted two full pages of letters denouncing Eng’s column, and its publication, along with the paper’s statement of apology.

Marchers in New Zealand on Int’l Women’s Day protest acquittal of cops charged with rape



Aotearoa Indymedia/John Darroch

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, March 8—Hundreds of people marched here, as well as in Wellington, today, on International Women’s Day, to protest the recent acquittal of three cops charged with rape. “However we dress, wherever we go, yes means yes, and no means no!” chanted the demonstrators.

—JANET ROTH

Maori force New Zealand gov’t to suspend land sale

BY TERRY COGGAN

WHENUAKITE, New Zealand—Protesting the threatened alienation of lands they claim as their own, Maori in three locations in the North Island have forced the government to suspend plans to sell the lands to the highest bidder.

“We still don’t trust the Crown. We’ve been burnt before by their lawyers,” said Joe Davis March 4. He was explaining why the protest occupation at Whenuakite on the Coromandel Peninsula—begun six days earlier—would continue in spite of the government’s announcement of a one-month delay to “review” the sales process. Organizers of other such actions at Rangiputa in Northland and Tongariro in the central North Island have also pledged to continue their occupations.

Davis is a spokesperson for Ngati Hei, part of the Hauraki grouping of tribes, which organized the Whenuakite protest, where about 20 people are camped. He spoke to the *Militant* at the occupation site where outside tents are decorated with Maori motifs. Placards read, “Hands off Hauraki Taonga” (property, treasure), and “Labour sells Maori Land.”

Davis said the government had taken the land in 1859 under dubious leasing arrangements. “We’re now here to repossess it,” he said.

As part of the land claim process, the current Labour Party–led government originally agreed to pay up to $NZ7.5 million (NZ$1=US 68 cents) to Hauraki and set aside land for possible purchase with this money. This land consists of small, unconnected parcels, compared with the 2,755-acre Whenuakite block, which has a market value of $NZ10 million. “That’s rats and mice stuff,” Davis said, referring to the government set-aside. “But Whenuakite would give us an ideal economic base.”

He continued, “Farmland has been turned into coastal developments, luxury housing, where you rarely see a Maori. People on $10 or $12 an hour—and that’s us—can’t afford to buy a house around here.”

Ngati Hei’s stand has received support from local farmers, residents, and major tribes such as the Tainui Waka Alliance and Tuwharetoa.

As this issue goes to press, the government announced it has deferred the sale of land at Whenuakite and Rangiputa for a year, and has widened its review to encompass all contested Crown-owned land.

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Pacific Islands: Send NZ$50 to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

Protest in Washington

Continued from front page

Nicholas, a contractor, was beheaded in Iraq by al-Qaeda supporters; Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson; and former Georgia Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney.

"We want the people in the White House out of our house and arrested for crimes against humanity," said Sheehan. "Impeach.org" read a large banner on the stage. "We're here in the shadow of the war machine. We need to shut it down," she said. Sheehan has organized encampments near President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, to protest the war in Iraq.

"Impeachment is the first step in restoring law and order and government by the people," said Clark.

"Why is impeachment off the table?" asked McKinney.

Bradford Hollis, 59, a social worker from Durham, North Carolina, said he had hoped this march would be as big as one he attended as a student in 1967. "It seems like we keep marching and marching and nothing changes," he said.

A large student and youth contingent marched behind several school banners. Chris Munsur, 26, and Solomon Wilhelm, 25, came on a bus from the University of Toledo in Ohio. "UT Against the War has been organizing lots of activities on the campus," said Munsur. "Getting Bush out of office is the key," added Wilhelm.

Katherine Lima, 24, came on a bus with fellow students from the Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York. "This was my first time going to a rally. I am very glad that I came," said Lima. "It did seem like the march was more about Bush than about the war," she noted.

As with the January 27 peace action organized by United For Peace and Justice, opposition to the ongoing U.S.-led war and occupation of Afghanistan, another central theater in Washington's "global war on terror," was absent from the demands of the organizers, who called for an "end to colonial occupation" in Iraq, Palestine, and Haiti.

Some among the protesters expressed the view—advanced by most liberals—that the imperialist assault on Afghanistan was justified.

"This started as a war on terror but we didn't take out the terrorists," said Shahrukh Arif, 19 a student at Kennesaw State University near Atlanta. "Afghanistan might have been justified, but we went about it the wrong way."

Others didn't share that view.

"I think Afghanistan was just the foot in the door for the U.S. in the Middle East," said Arif's friend and schoolmate Matthew Kinsey.

Eddie Beck and Paul Pederson contributed to this article.

6,000 march in New York to protest Iraq war



Militant/Salm Kolis

NEW YORK, March 18—About 6,000 people marched through Manhattan to the United Nations today to protest the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Similar actions took place in dozens of cities on the fourth anniversary of the imperialist invasion of Iraq by U.S. and allied troops.

—BRIAN WILLIAMS

N.Y. cops indicted in killing

Continued from front page

ments and convictions for all of the cops involved.

"All five should be indicted on murder one," B.M. Marcus, a small business owner from Brooklyn whose nephew was killed by the cops in 1998, told the *Militant.* Speakers at the rally called for a special prosecutor and demanded the trial be held in a Queens court.

The indictments were unsealed two days after a similar rally of 100 in Manhattan's Union Square, one in a string of protests demanding justice in the case since last November.

As a Queens grand jury convened last week, New York police chief Raymond Kelly mobilized 1,700 cops, saying they were "available if we want to deploy them" to put down unrest.

Five undercover cops gunned down Bell and his two friends, Trent Benefield, 23, and Joseph Guzman, 31, as the three sat in Bell's car outside a Jamaica, Queens, nightclub. Both Benefield and Guzman were seriously wounded.

Queens Attorney General Richard Brown announced at a March 19 press conference that detectives Gerscard Isnora, who fired 11 times, and Michael Oliver, who fired 31 times, stopping to reload his gun, were indicted on charges including first and second degree manslaughter. They could serve up to 25 years in prison if convicted. Marc Cooper, who fired four shots, faces charges of reckless endangerment for firing a bullet that passed "through a window of an occupied AirTrain Station." The misdemeanor carries a maximum sentence of one year.

Cops Michael Carey, who fired three times, and Paul Headley, who fired once, will not face any charges. The two have been placed on desk duty.

At a March 19 press conference in Harlem, Democratic Party politician Reverend Alfred Sharpton said the indictments "fall short."

"Although some people will be disappointed in the grand jury's decision, we have to respect the results of our justice system," said New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg.

But many working people in this city are expressing a different opinion.

"The system is not going to give us any justice; we have to get it on our own," Nicholas Haywood, whose son was killed by the police 13 years ago, told the crowd at the March 17 action. Other speakers at the action called for Kelly's resignation and community control of the police. "I think they are setting this up for an acquittal," city councilman Charles Barron, a Democrat, told the crowd.

Michael Hardy, an attorney for Benefield and Guzman, predicted it will be a least a year before the cops go on trial.

Sarah Katz contributed to this article.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco

The Fight for Women's Equality Today. Speaker: Lea Sherman, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 30, Dinner 6:30 p.m.; program 7:30 p.m. *3926 Mission. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.*

NEW YORK

Manhattan

New Law on Sex Offenders in New York: A Deep Attack on Democratic Rights. Fri., March 30. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. Donation: $5 dinner, $5 program. *307 W. 36th Street, 10th floor (near 8th Ave., use north elevators). Tel.: (212) 629-3349.*

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh

Capitalism's Increasing Economic and Social Instability. Event for the *Militant* Fund. Speaker: Ved Dookhun, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 30. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. Donation: $5 dinner, $5 program. *5907 Penn Ave., Room 225. Tel.: (412) 365-1090.*

TEXAS

Houston

How Cuba's Socialist Revolution Took Up the Fight to End Racism against Chinese Immigrants: Lessons for Today. Speaker: Tom Leonard, former merchant seaman, veteran leader of the Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 30. Dinner 6:30 p.m.; program 7:30 p.m. Donation: $5 dinner, $5 program. *4800 W. 34th St., Suite C-51A. Tel.: (713) 688-4919.*

'Long war' lies ahead in Iraq

Continued from front page

down, focused in Baghdad and the largely Sunni Anbar province, is in its early stages since less than half of the 28,000 additional U.S. troops have arrived.

In Baghdad, Navy Rear Admiral Mark Fox said civilian casualties in the capital were reduced by 50 percent in the first month of the operation, the Pentagon press service reported March 19. Fox said 25 Joint Security Stations are operating in the city, and the goal is 70. "This is a conditions-based effort," he said. "If we need more, we will build more."

On Capitol Hill, Democrats are proposing to add $24 billion in domestic spending to a $100 billion supplemental war spending bill for Iraq in hopes of enticing Republican votes. The legislation would also place "readiness" requirements on future troop deployments and set an Aug. 31, 2008, deadline for withdrawing U.S. troops from a combat role in Iraq. Bush has said he will veto such a bill.

"Members of Congress," said Bush in his address, "have a responsibility to ensure that this bill provides the funds and the flexibility that our troops need to accomplish their mission. . . . a clean bill that does not use funding for our troops as leverage to get special-interest spending for their districts. And they have a responsibility to get this bill to my desk without strings and without delay."

Liberals and other critics of the Bush administration have not offered an effective alternative to the government's course on Iraq because they accept the basic premise of the "war on terror."

A March 18 *Washington Post* editorial, reflecting on four years of the Iraq war, expressed half-hearted regrets for supporting the war but concluded, "Unfortunately, none of this provides bright guidelines to make the next decisions easier—not even those facing the nation right now in Iraq. It's tempting to say that if it was wrong to go in, it must be wrong to stay in. But how Iraq evolves will fundamentally shape the region and deeply affect U.S. security. Walking away is likely to make a bad situation worse. A patient, sustained U.S. commitment, with gradually diminishing military forces, could still help Iraq to move in the right direction."

A March 7 statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council calling for an end to the war was couched in the same framework. "Blind pursuit of the war now undermines the very war on terror that was its justification," the union federation said. It recommends adoption of the main proposals from the now moribund Iraq Study Group.

—CALENDAR—

Presentations of 'Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution'

ALABAMA

Birmingham

Sat., March 31, 2:00 p.m. Chairperson: Horace Huntley, member University of Alabama Birmingham History Department and Director, Oral History Project at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. Speakers: Youfeng Yang, Chinese Student and Scholar Association; Dennis Laumann, Associate Professor of African History at University of Memphis; Edward Tang, Associate Professor of American Studies at University of Alabama; Martín Koppel, Pathfinder Press interviewer of three generals for the book; and representative, Student African-American Studies Association. *Smolian International House, 1600 10th Ave. S. University of Alabama. For more information: Tel.: (205) 329-1645; www.uab.edu/cssa.*

IOWA

Iowa City

Wed., April 4, 4:00 p.m. Speakers: Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *Our History Is Still Being Written*, president of Pathfinder Press; Ben Mai, President of Asian American Coalition, University of Iowa; and John Lee, Korean Undergraduate Association. *University of Iowa, Ohio State Room (Rm#) IMU.*

Des Moines

Thurs., April 5, 7:00 p.m. Speakers: Mary-Alice Waters; Arson Xu, International Student Association; Samuel Li, La Fuerza Latina. *Drake University, Olmsted Center*, *Bulldog Theater. For more information: Tel.: (515) 779-7902; e-mail:gx0001@drake.edu.*

‘Stop raids, deportations!’

Young Socialists join immigrant rights actions

This column is written and edited by members of the Young Socialists, a revolutionary socialist youth organization. For more information contact the YS at 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018; tel.: (212) 629-6649; e-mail: youngsocialists@mac.com.

YOUNG SOCIALISTS IN ACTION

BY EDDIE BECK

NEWARK, New Jersey—From responding to factory raids by *la migra* to mobilizations by students on campuses against chauvinist forces, the Young Socialists are joining fellow workers, students, and others in the fight for legalization of all undocumented immigrants across the United States.

On February 6, YSers joined students at the University of California in Los Angeles protesting the presence of rightist Minutemen on campus. Despite the short notice, several hundred students came to the action, reported Michael Ortega, the YS organizer in Los Angeles.

YS members in New York joined a similar demonstration at New York University in lower Manhattan on February 22 to protest against a “game” called “Find the Illegal Immigrant,” organized by the NYU College Republicans.

In Freehold, New Jersey, immigrant day laborers recently won a court settlement that drops local restrictions on their ability to seek work. They are now fighting a proposed town ordinance that would impose penalties on those renting to undocumented immigrants.

YS members joined 300 protesters in Freehold on March 5 as councilman Marc LeVine apologized to a public meeting for racist comments he had made online that branded Latinos as “promiscuous.”

“I just want them to treat us like we’re human, give us papers, and let us go to college,” José Retes, 13, a student in Freehold, said in an interview.

On March 10, Young Socialists in Chicago joined 1,000 people at a rally there to mark the one-year anniversary of the 100,000-strong action in the city, the first of many mass mobilizations last spring demanding legalization of immigrants.

Those proletarian actions showed the U.S. working class has been politicized. This was graphically demonstrated last May Day, when over 2 million workers across the country downed their tools, in the first nationwide strike, to place political demands on the government.

“We are building and joining these actions to demand legalization of all immigrants now, an end to the raids and deportations, and dropping the ‘identity theft’ and other charges against the workers arrested at Swift and in other recent raids,” said Christian Castro, a garment worker and YS organizer in Chicago.

“All the arrested workers should be freed! This is a life-and-death question for the labor movement in this country, for the unity of the working class and for mutual defense with its allies,” he said. “We can’t rely on the Democrats, Republicans, or any other capitalist politicians. We have to keep our eyes on the ranks of the working class who are saying: ‘We are workers, not criminals!’”

Ben O’Shaughnessy contributed to this article.

Young Socialists join rallies, demand: ‘Not one penny, or person, for Washington’s wars!’



Militant/Eddie Beck

NEW YORK, March 18—The Young Socialists participated in a march here today to advance the demand for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. and all “coalition” troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, and all the theaters of Washington’s “war on terrorism.”

Many of the more than 6,000 people marching carried signs that read, “End the War! Bring the Troops Home Now.” The action was called by the United For Peace and Justice coalition.

The YS contingent marched behind a banner that read, “Not one penny, not one person for Washington’s wars! Bring the troops home now!”

Young socialists also took part in a larger peace march the previous day in Washington, D.C., (see front-page article) as well as in similar actions on the West Coast and other U.S. cities around the fourth anniversary of the imperialist invasion of Iraq.

—ROSS HOGAN

Help expand ‘Militant’ readership; donate to $100,000 fund drive

Continued from front page

fund drive will depend above all on substantially increasing the number of such consistent promoters of the paper.

Over the last year and a half, the *Militant* has increasingly become, in the eyes of thousands of workers, a tool they can use in resisting the bosses’ onslaught on wages, job safety, dignity, social security, and trade union rights. It has become for them a more reliable source of accurate information on world politics.

The paper’s socialist editorial policy also attracts working people and student youth to a revolutionary perspective as the only viable solution to capitalism’s spreading wars and economic disorder: the road of the working class toward taking state power out of the hands of the tiny minority of billionaires that rule the United States and other capitalist countries, and joining the struggle to build a society based on human solidarity and social equality—socialism.

The place of the *Militant* today is more striking as the labor movement continues to weaken, with the U.S. unionization rate dropping another half percentage point to 12 percent last year.

A recent sign of this trend is the union officialdom’s effort to hide its course of subordinating the interests of working people to electing “friendly” capitalist politicians—which is the reason for the unions’ decline—behind lobbying for bills such as the Employee Free Choice Act, or “card check” legislation the House of Representatives passed March 1.

The trade union tops and middle-class radicals like the Communist Party USA herald this bill as labor’s salvation, because it would allow for union recognition if a majority of workers in a company simply signed a card saying they want the union without requiring a vote.

This is masquerading by the labor officialdom as doing something to organize the unorganized. Contrary to claims by union officials, the problem workers face in trying to unionize is not existing labor laws that are “ineffective,” such as the National Labor Relations Act that requires elections to certify a union, but the labor tops’ course of class collaboration.

Class-conscious workers can use the *Militant* to explain that they are for secret-ballot union representation elections because it’s the most effective way for workers to demonstrate what they want. And they can point to experiences over the last decade, reported accurately in the *Militant,* showing that even in today’s adverse conditions workers have won such elections when they’ve taken ownership of their struggles from the beginning.

Given the current state of the labor movement, selling *Militant* subscriptions on the job and elsewhere, and soliciting donations for its fund drive, is central to the political work of revolutionary-minded workers.

The *Militant’s* bilingual character makes it accessible to the vast majority of toilers in the United States and many other countries, which aids the effort to increase the numbers of those distributing and using it. This has become evident recently in the attraction to the paper, in response to immigration raids, among meat packers and others in the midwestern United States and beyond.

Students and other youth can also be drawn in, even more than last year, in making these campaigns their own.

To aid these efforts, several books and pamphlets that contain a popular explanation of the program of the revolutionary working-class movement will be offered at special prices along with any *Militant* subscription: *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism* at $1; *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* and *The First and Second Declarations of Havana* at $5 each; and issues 12 and 13 of the magazine *New International* at $25 for both.

Join in! You can order a bundle if you don’t already get one at 70 cents per copy to show the *Militant* around and sell subs. And you can organize house meetings or other fundraisers to get donations for the fund drive. For more information, or to collaborate with other supporters of the paper in these efforts, please contact the *Militant* directly or distributors nearest you (see directory on p. 8).

Welcome on board!

Sincerely,

Argiris Malapanis, Editor

Hundreds protest immigration raid

Continued from front page

separation of the families, and called for a moratorium on the raids until a “fair and just” immigration law is passed. Two of the speakers, and many in the crowd, expressed support for the demand to legalize all immigrants.

“We want this action to be more than just a ceremonial meeting,” the husband of one of the arrested women, who was introduced as José, told the crowd. “We want to get out the message about their situation as wide as possible. My wife calls me daily asking for help for all the detained. They are being mistreated.”

Manuel Alfaro, a Honduran construction worker, who came to the rally with two friends, told the *Militant* that his wife was being detained in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. “This kind of support and the presence of a lot of people is what we need,” he said. “We are not giving up.”

Under pressure from the protests, at least 60 of the arrested workers have been released for “humanitarian reasons.” After thousands expressed outrage at the incarceration of more than 200 in jails in Texas, U.S. District judge Richard Stearns ordered a halt on the transfer of any more of the detained workers to jails outside of Massachusetts.

“They treat us like criminals,” said René Morales, a mechanic from Franklin, Massachusetts, who came with 20 others organized by a local Catholic church. “We want the right to work,” he said.

Groups came from across Massachusetts—including a lively contingent of the Service Employees International Union from Springfield—and from neighboring states. Representatives of the United Food and Commercial Workers and the state AFL-CIO also attended.

Members of the Chinese Progressive Association in Boston brought signs reading, “Our Ancestors Were Undocumented Too,” and “War Is Crime, Working Is Not. Who Are the Real Criminals?”

At the beginning of the event a woman holding up a sign that read, “ICE protects America by deporting illegal immigrants,” kept trying to interrupt the speakers, The crowd drowned her out, chanting in Spanish, “We’re here and we’re not leaving!” She was eventually escorted out by the police.

At the end of the program, organizers passed buckets around for donations. Some $85,000 has been collected so far for a fund for the relatives of the arrested workers. “The New Bedford Immigrant Families/Niños Fund” aims to raise at least $250,000 to help these working-class families pay for food, rent, medicine, and utilities.

GREAT SOCIETY



Harry Ring

Children, parents jailed by *la migra!*—"TAYLOR, Texas—Khadijah Bessuges is confined by metal gates and razor wire. She wears a uniform. She sleeps in an 8-by-15 cell, and stands by her cot four times a day when guards count heads. She has only two pairs of panties. Her favorite teddy bear was confiscated. But she has her father, Sebastien, who sleeps in the cell with her. Khadijah is 9 years old. She is one of 208 [!] children being held with their parents at the T. Don Hutto family detention center, the Department of Homeland Security's answer to the problem of families caught living in or entering the country illegally."—*Los Angeles Times.*

P.S.—The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a court brief challenging the illegal jailing of undocumented children. The lawsuit does not challenge jailing of the parents, since they are considered to be legally incarcerated while waiting for court-ordered deportation.

Urgent, bring down imperialism!—"About 18,000 children die every day because of hunger and malnutrition, and 850 million people go to bed every night with empty stomachs, a 'terrible indictment of the world of 2007,' said the head of the UN food agency."—Wire service

Give your boss a copy—Researchers report that people with heart ailments who took 30 minute naps at least three times a week were 37 percent less likely to die of heart disease.

Don't skinny dip, don't gargle—The Los Angeles County Pacific Ocean beachfront has suffered frequent contaminated raw sewage spills. Outmoded and inadequate, the swelling county's sewer piping is totally obsolete.

Kind of like Las Vegas—"Five Kaiser Permanente hospitals were among the 28 institutions with the highest death rates in California for patients with pneumonia."—*Los Angeles Times.*

Protesters in Freehold, New Jersey, condemn anti-immigrant measure

BY EDDIE BECK

FREEHOLD, New Jersey—Chanting, "*Aquí estamos y no nos vamos"* (We're here and we're not leaving), some 300 immigrant workers and supporters rallied here in front of borough hall March 5. The demonstrators expressed opposition to a proposal by the town's Rental Property Advisory Committee to require anyone renting an apartment or home to produce proof of citizenship or permanent residency.

"The mayor is trying to take away our places to live," Fernando Sanchez, 37, a day laborer from Mexico who has lived in Freehold for three years working in landscaping, told the *Militant*. "We are just here looking for a way to raise our families."

The action was called by Casa Freehold, the United Day Laborers of Freehold, and the Monmouth County chapter of the Latino Leadership Alliance.

The demonstrators also condemned the racist comments made by City Councilman Marc LeVine. Last November LeVine wrote that Latino immigrants "expect to subsidize their mistakes in growing large families that they cannot afford to support on their own."

At the city council meeting taking place the evening of the protest, LeVine offered his apologies for these comments. He also felt obligated to repeat the apology in a public statement he read to the protesters outside.

In February, the Rental Property Advisory Committee submitted to the city council a 15-point proposal "to strengthen the enforcement of housing codes" that had a strong focus on overcrowding. In such cases, they suggest giving landlords increased fines, jail time and mandatory community service, and requiring them to "reimburse the school district for children of illegally housed tenants who wrongfully attend Freehold Borough schools."

These recommendations will be taken up at a future meeting.

"The mayor and city council have always acted against the immigrant community," said Rita Dentino, a leader of Casa Freehold. "We want the proposal off the table."

Angel Lariscy from Newark, New Jersey, contributed to this article.

ON THE PICKET LINE

10,000 workers in New York rally against health-care cuts

NEW YORK, March 15—Some 10,000 health-care workers rallied here today against the state government's proposal to cut $1.3 billion in funding to hospitals and Medicaid. These cutbacks would eliminate 36,000 jobs and close or reduce services in 57 hospitals, 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers union president Dennis Rivera told the demonstrators.

That union organized the march. Chanting, "No more cuts," protesters carried signs saying "Patients are our special interest," "Save our community hospitals," and "Stop the Bush cuts."

"Our hospital is responsible for many Medicare and Medicaid patients," Maureen Meier, a registered nurse for 22 years at Southside Hospital, told the *Militant*. "These cuts will cause us to cut back on services. You can't help people without supplies, without enough staff."

The march up Manhattan's Third Avenue was also part of a response to a high-profile campaign against the union. New York governor Eliot Spitzer has called the union "crybabies," "guardians of the status quo," and a "special interest group."



Militant/Eddie Beck

Rally of 10,000 health-care workers in New York March 15 against cutbacks

Also speaking at the rally was Transport Workers Union Local 100 president Roger Toussaint. He promised to stand with the SEIU the same way they stood by the transit workers during their December 2005 strike.

—Eddie Beck

Gas explosion in Russian coal mine kills more than 100 miners

A March 19 methane gas explosion in a coal mine in Siberia, Russia, killed at least 107 of the 200 miners working there. As of March 21, three miners were still trapped underground, with rescue efforts impeded by flooding and gas. At least five of the rescued miners were injured, reported mine officials. The explosion occurred at the Ulyanovskaya mine in Novokuznetsk, a city located 1,850 miles east of Moscow.

—Brian Williams

Shipyard workers in Mississippi strike for new contract

Continued from front page

jump to $200 a month for health-care coverage, and little to make their dangerous jobs safer. "We often have to weld without a fire watch, and sometimes there is so much dust in the hull of the ship you can't see your hand in front of you," said Pearson, describing deteriorating safety conditions.

"A lot of times we are told to work on or under scaffolding that isn't safe," added Dupree.

Many of the 30 to 40 workers on the picket line today said the company's $2.50 an hour pay raise offer over three years does not address the declining living conditions workers in this coastal area face after being hard hit by Hurricane Katrina.

"We're still trying to put our lives together," said Moffett. "We've lost homes, we're fighting with insurance companies, the cost of living keeps climbing."

"The company makes a lot of speeches about us being the best shipbuilders in the world," added McDougall, "but when it comes time to be paid for what we do, all of a sudden we are nothing."

Northrop Grumman is stepping up pressure on the workers and trying to turn public opinion against the strikers. A two-page ad in today's *Mississippi Press,* a local daily, touts the company's "Win Win Offer." Strikers said this follows letters threatening to cut off health insurance if workers don't return to their jobs.

On the picket line today unionists from other workplaces stopped by. Some brought food, others dropped off firewood. Local merchants have kept the picket line well stocked. On March 16, some 50 workers from the Avondale Northrop Grumman shipyard in New Orleans joined the picket line. "We have a lot of support, and we're more united ourselves and more prepared for this strike than fights in the past," said Dupree.

According to the *Mississippi Press,* the company has asked the unions to resume negotiations.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

April 2, 1982

In 1981 the infant mortality rate in Cuba was the lowest in the history of the country. It was on a par with that of industrially more advanced countries. According to a report in the March 7 *Granma Weekly Review*, infant mortality in Cuba was 18.5 per 1,000 live births. This is a reduction from the 1980 figure of 19.6.

The infant mortality in other Latin American countries was considerably higher. For example, the rate in Guatemala was 69.7; in Mexico, 49.7; in Venezuela, 44.5; and in Argentina, 44.9. In the United States the rate was 14.1; in West Germany, 14.7.

Cuba, with a population of some 10 million, has a total of 16,193 doctors. This figure is expected to rise to at least 17,000 this year and to 20,000 by 1985.

April 1, 1957

The program to integrate New York City schools, which was passed by the Board of Education on February 28th, is under attack. Racist groups, principally in Queens, are demanding a City Council hearing on the integration proposals.

The Federation of Civic Councils of the Borough of Queens says it is for "natural" but against "forced" integration and has written the Board of Education requesting clarification. Two thousand letters criticizing the integration program ("largely similar," according to the *New York Times*) have been received by Charles Silver, President of the Board of Education. Ninety percent were from Queens, although Queens has the smallest number of Negro and Puerto Rican children—less than 5%.

April 2, 1932

BERLIN—The parliamentary battle of March 13 is over. 18,600,000 votes for Hindenburg, 11,333,000 for Hitler, 4,970,000 for Thaelman. The conditions preceding the elections were full of promise for an absolute growth of the Communist movement. The economic crisis has reached an unprecedentedly low level. It produces its effects in the tremendously large unemployment figures, in the shutting down of factories, mass dismissals, bank crashes and export decline. The Socialist Party leaders succeeded in restricting the question of the decisive struggle between Fascism and proletariat to the sphere of parliamentary contest. They could succeed in this only because the Communist Party and along with it, the proletariat, is incapable of conducting an extra-parliamentary struggle.

Vancouver Asian Centre hosts meeting on book by Chinese-Cuban generals

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN AND STEVE PENNER

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—"*Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution* is very relevant to what we are doing at the Asian Library," explained head librarian Eleanor Yuen in her opening remarks to a March 12 meeting of 80 people here at the Asian Centre at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

Prior to the meeting Yuen gave Mary-Alice Waters, the editor of the book, a tour of the Asian Library. It has the largest collection of Asian-language materials in Canada.

Our History Is Still Being Written is published by Pathfinder Press and is based on interviews with Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, all three of whom are brigadier generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces.

"In reading this book I was immediately struck by the title," Yuen remarked. Chinese have been discriminated against all over the world, she said, but they seem to have made significant progress in Cuba.

She quoted the closing words of the interview with Sío Wong—"A better world is possible. But only with a socialist revolution." She added, "I want to know more about this."

About one third of the audience were of Asian descent, including students and others who came from off campus. Some noted they had come to the meeting at UBC because they had been unable to get to the previous day's meeting at the Vancouver Public Library, which drew 300 people. Many, like Yuen, wanted to find out more about the history of Chinese immigration in the Americas. The meeting was sponsored by the Asian Library, Latin American Studies at UBC, Pathfinder Books, and *Perspectives*, an English-Chinese student newspaper at UBC.

Speakers on the panel included Allan Cho, editor-in-chief of *Perspectives*; Karin Lee, award winning filmmaker who made *Canadian Steel: Chinese Grit*, the story of the Chinese workers who built the Canadian Pacific Railroad; Henry Yu, who is an associate professor both in the UBC History Department and in Asian American Studies at the University of California in Los Angeles; and Waters, who is also president of Pathfinder Press.

Both Lee and Yu are also board members of the Chinese Canadian Historical Society of British Columbia.

Cho explained that he and the other student volunteers at *Perspectives* "were intrigued by the book when we first learned about it." The fact that the three generals, Choy, Chui, and Sío Wong, were "the same age as us" when they made the revolution—like most of those involved in overthrowing the Batista dictatorship—"struck a chord," he said.

Cho said they were also attracted to the fact that the Cuban Revolution was an "outlet for dealing with racial oppression." He called attention to the review of *Our History Is Still Being Written* by Johnson Chan, the English-language editor of *Perspectives*, available in the paper's current issue. A number of people picked up a copy at the display table.

Karin Lee told the meeting that when she learned about the book she changed her plans to visit Cuba as a tourist and instead went to investigate the possibility of making a film that would tell the fascinating story of the Chinese-Cubans.

"I found it interesting that when Chinese-Canadians were fighting for [their rights] that Chinese-Cubans were fighting to overthrow the Batista dictatorship," Lee said. She was particularly interested when they told her about the all-Chinese volunteer militia organized in 1960 to advance and defend the revolution.

Historian Henry Yu talked about the origins of the Chinese-Cuban community in the middle of the 19th century. They were brought to Cuba by Spain, that country's colonial master, because it had been forced to curtail the African slave trade.

"The Chinese worked as contract labor—the indentured labor system which replaced slavery," he said. "It was one of the most violent and brutal forms of labor as the sugar plantation owners literally worked you to death. They had no interest in keeping you alive" beyond the years of the contract, as they did with slaves who were their property, Yu continued.

"What happened to the millions of Chinese that went around the world often under similar conditions?" Yu asked. "What is their story? I like the title of the book, *Our History Is Still Being Written*, because their story is still being written from below" by the very people who made and are still making history.

One central fact is woven throughout these interviews, Waters explained. How the measures taken by the popular revolutionary government headed by Fidel Castro and carried out by the armed workers and peasants themselves eradicated institutionalized racism and eliminated the property relations on which it is built. In doing so, they opened the way to effectively wage the more difficult fight against all manifestations of racist prejudice.

"As Moisés Sío Wong puts it so forcefully," Waters said, "the greatest measure taken against discrimination 'was the revolution itself.' The Chinese community in Cuba is different from Peru, Brazil, Argentina, or Canada, he emphasized. And that difference is the triumph of a socialist revolution."

Two students, Kaitlynn and Tara, told the *Militant* that they came to the meeting because they wanted to find out about Cuba and socialism.

Event held in Montreal on book on Chinese-Cubans in the Cuban Revolution



Militant/Luc Paquin

MONTREAL—Undeterred by a snow storm, some 50 people participated in a lively presentation here March 17 of *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*. The panelists who spoke about the book were (pictured above, from left to right) Yvonne Lo (partially hidden), coordinator of the Chinese-language team at Radio Centre-Ville, a community station; Mary-Alice Waters, editor of the book and president of Pathfinder Press; moderator Janet Lumb, director of Festival Accès Asie, an Asian heritage celebration; Armand Vaillancourt, a well-known sculptor; and Sam Noumoff, former director of the Centre for Developing-Area Studies at McGill University.

This was the sixth such meeting in a cross-Canada series of presentations of the book that began a week earlier in Vancouver, followed by events in the Toronto area. A final citywide gathering is being held March 25 in Toronto.

—MICHEL PRAIRIE

Australia event promotes 'Our History Is Still Being Written'

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia—Arthur Gar Lock Chang faced "political discrimination and persecution like the three Cuban generals" and has been a fighter for political equality throughout his life, said Mabel Lee. She was introducing Chang, a veteran of the struggles for the rights of Chinese in Australia, at a March 11 event here presenting the book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution,* published by Pathfinder Press.

Chang and Lee, a writer and translator of books by Nobel prize-winning Chinese novelist Gao Xingjian, were among the panelists who addressed the 50 people present. Among them were members of the China Friendship Society, Chinese Australian Historical Society, Australia-Cuba Friendship Society, and a few students.

Also speaking were Adrian Hearn, a researcher on China–Latin America relations at the University of Technology in Sydney, where the event was held, and Martín Koppel, who participated in the interviews with the three Cuban generals upon which the book is based. The event was sponsored by the Chinese Australian Historical Society, the UTS Institute for International Studies, and Pathfinder Books.

James Flowers of the Australia-China Friendship Society welcomed the audience to the event, which was chaired by Rebecca Pinkstone of the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society.

Hearn said *Our History Is Still Being Written* was "an important step" in understanding the history behind today's "relations between China, Cuba, and Latin America." He pointed to the book's description of the heroic role of Chinese immigrants in the Cuban wars of independence against Spanish colonialism.

Lee engaged Chang in an interview-style exchange on some of his experiences fighting discrimination against Chinese immigrants. Chang arrived in Australia in 1935 with his father, who he said was subjected to "bonded labor," forced to work for a particular boss or face deportation. He could not become an Australian citizen until 1973, after the end of the government's openly racist "White Australia" immigration policies.

During World War II, when many Chinese seamen were stranded in Sydney since they could not return to China under Japanese imperialist occupation, Chang joined the Chinese Youth League and became an interpreter and spokesman for the Chinese Seamen's Union. He became involved in solidarity by Chinese and other workers with the national liberation struggle in China and the Indonesian struggle against Dutch colonial rule. After the war, Chang, now 85, joined legal and strike battles for "equality for Chinese workers in Australia."

Koppel said the main difference between the Chinese community in Cuba and in other countries is the socialist revolution that uprooted racist discrimination and "eliminated the property relations that are the basis of oppression and exploitation under capitalism."

In Cuba, he said, "workers and farmers are the motor force of the revolution" and have "a leadership that has never betrayed their interests." For working-class fighters and revolutionary-minded youth around the world, the Cuban Revolution offers a "living example of how to fight and win."

In the discussion period, Lee said the political equality enjoyed by Chinese-Cubans was "inconceivable" in Australia, where, she remarked, those of Chinese ancestry are still viewed as "guests."

Other speakers took up questions such as the advances made by women in revolutionary Cuba, the role of Cuba in the liberation struggles in southern Africa, and Cuban relations with Beijing, especially after the Sino-Soviet split from the mid-1960s through the 1980s.

Members of the audience bought 12 copies of *Our History Is Still Being Written* as well as a few other Pathfinder titles.

How workers control led to the nationalization of Cuban industry in 1960s

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

In August 1960 the new revolutionary government of Cuba nationalized major U.S.-owned industry in the country. Three months later, it nationalized most foreign and Cuban-owned banks, as well as large-scale Cuban-owned industry.

The decrees were a response to factory "interventions" by Cuban workers taking place all across the island. Fresh from their Jan. 1, 1959, victory in toppling the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, and spurred by acts of imperialist aggression and economic sabotage, Cuban toilers in their millions were taking over decision-making generally considered the purview of the bosses.

The political lessons of this process for working people around the world today are clearly summarized in the preface by Mary-Alice Waters to *The First and Second Declarations of Havana,* recently published by Pathfinder Press. The way the Cuban people carried out such "interventions" was described in some detail in a feature in last week's issue (see "How Cuban toilers established workers state" in March 26 *Militant*).

Describing accurately how such workers' control of production develops has been a cornerstone of generalizing the experiences of the working class and its allies in the revolutionary struggle to take power out of the hands of the capitalist class and transform society into one based on human solidarity.

Written more than two decades before the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* drafted by Leon Trotsky, a leader of the October 1917 Bolshevik-led revolution in Russia, addresses the question of workers control of industry based on the experiences of the international workers movement up until that time.

"The most elementary stage [of workers control] is merely the realization gained by the workers through experiences such as war, unemployment, the chaos of capitalist society, the arbitrariness of the bosses, etc., that they must begin to exert their own control in the plants," wrote Socialist Workers Party leader Joseph Hansen in his introduction to the *Transitional Program*. Hansen draws on the first four congresses of the Communist International, when it was led by V.I. Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders, in stressing workers control as "the struggle for control of production, not as a plan for the bureaucratic organization of the national economy."

As last week's article described, from 1959 on, Washington attacked the Cuban Revolution through both legal and extralegal means. These included attempts to cripple the Cuban economy. In addition to cutting off the import quota for sugar, the country's main export that Havana sold to the United States, the U.S. rulers and their cronies among Cuban capitalists resorted to economic sabotage. In January and February 1960, for example, planes taking off from the United States bombed sugarcane fields across Cuba, burning more than 268,000 tons of cane. Railroads, water pumping stations, and other economic centers were sabotaged.

Such extreme experiences help "set the most combative elements of the proletariat in motion" toward exerting control in their plants, SWP leader George Novack wrote in his introduction to the *Transitional Program*.

The July 2, 1960, *New York Times* reported that Texaco, Esso, and Shell had refused to process oil Cuba had purchased from the Soviet Union at their refineries in Cuba because doing so "would injure the principle of their managerial control." That decision did certainly injure the bosses' control: refinery workers "intervened," making their own decisions on whose oil will be refined and preventing sabotage by the shocked capitalist managers. The Cuban government backed them up and later nationalized the refineries.

The resolution "On the Question of Tactics" from the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921, cited by Hansen in his introduction to the *Transitional Program*, explains how workers control of industry, as it advances, "takes an evident political aspect and requires political leadership. Meanwhile the increasingly frequent cases of seizures of factories, and at the same time impossibility of managing them without disposing of the financial apparatus, clearly puts before the workers the timely problem of getting hold of the financial system and, through it, of the whole industry."

Through factory interventions, workers embark on a road that would "culminate in a confrontation by the insurgent masses with the capitalist rulers, and the organization of a counterpower," as Novack wrote. The Cuban toilers had a political leadership that helped them advance along this road.

Far from being a governmental decree issued from the top down, the nationalizations of land, industry, and banking in Cuba—just like in the October 1917 Russian Revolution—were the response of a conscious revolutionary leadership to the initiatives working people were taking in their millions. These and other experiences led the working class in Cuba "to the immediate and decisive clash with the bourgeoisie" that the Comintern described.

New Militant Labor Forum hall opens in Minneapolis



Militant/Diana Newberry

MINNEAPOLIS, March 10—The grand opening of the new Twin Cities Militant Labor Forum hall, where Pathfinder Books and the local headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists also share space, took place here tonight with a program on "Imperialism's Spreading Wars and Economic Disorder and the Strengthening of the Working Class." The new location is more accessible than the previous one in West St. Paul. It is centrally located in a commercial area of Minneapolis. Speakers included Alyson Kennedy (above speaking), a member of the SWP National Committee; Christian Villarreal, one of the volunteers who helped refurbish the new hall; and Kevin Dwire (seated, center), a meat packer in Des Moines, Iowa, who recently returned from a *Militant* sales and reporting trip to Kansas and Texas.

—REBECCA WILLIAMSON

UMWA: unsafe conditions caused Sago disaster

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, March 15—A report released by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) at a news conference here today says the death of 12 coal miners after a methane explosion at the Sago Mine in West Virginia more than a year ago was the result of unsafe conditions in the mine. The 68-page report also rejects the main conclusion of investigations by the mine operator and West Virginia's mine safety agency, which claimed the likely trigger of the disaster was a lightening strike.

On Jan. 2, 2006, an explosion ripped through the Sago Mine around 6:30 a.m. One miner was killed in the blast. Eleven others died of suffocation from toxic gases after being trapped in the mine for more than 40 hours. One worker survived.

"Twelve men are dead today who should not be," UMWA president Cecil Roberts said at the press conference. Roberts was joined by members of the dead miners' families.

"My dad survived the explosion," said Sara Bailey, daughter of miner George Junior Hamner. "The others should have been able to walk out of the mine that day."

"We strongly disagree with the conclusions of the company and West Virginia mine authorities that lightening was the source of this explosion," Roberts said. The union's investigation determined that the most likely cause of the blast was frictional activity from the mine roof, roof support, or material creating an electrical arc that ignited the explosive methane mixture in a sealed-off section of the mine, Roberts said.

The report cites testimony from company officials, miners, and a state inspector showing that the sealed section of the mine where the explosion likely originated had been abandoned because of deteriorating roof conditions. It cites testimony from mine superintendent Jeff Toler who said there were at least two roof falls in the section, one of them more than 100-feet long.

Roberts said the mine had no rescue team available, even though the law requires two rescue teams on site. Instead, four mine officials entered the mine 15 minutes after the blast to repair ventilation controls. They reached a section of the mine just 20 feet from the trapped miners but turned back due to toxic gas readings. The first trained rescue team did not go into the mine until 10 hours after the explosion.

The report calls for a permanent ban on Omega Blocks, a foam-type material used to construct barriers that seal off abandoned sections of a mine. Omega Blocks used at Sago were obliterated in the explosion. They were also destroyed in a similar blast in the Darby mine in Harlan, Kentucky, on May 20, 2006, which killed five miners. The federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has temporarily banned use of the material.

The UMWA report proposes that mine operators be required to install explosion-proof fire-resistant shelters in the mines, with a dedicated communication line to the surface and enough air, water, food, and medical supplies for at least five days.

Such a chamber saved the lives of 72 miners trapped underground for more than 30 hours last year at a potash mine, which is organized by a union, in Saskatchewan, Canada.

In March the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health and Training ordered mine owners to submit plans for safety chambers by April 15. In a March 8 order, MSHA did not require such chambers but did require mine owners to provide emergency air supplies that could last four days.

Che Guevara's contributions to the fight for socialism

Below are excerpts from Che Guevara and the Fight for Socialism Today. *Its French-language edition is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. The pamphlet, whose contents first appeared as the introduction to the 1992 French-language edition of* Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism *by Carlos Tablada, is a basic introduction to the political and economic course championed by Argentine-born Cuban revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara. He explained that socialism can only be built by free men and women who transform themselves as they collectively change their conditions of life and work. Copyright © 1992 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*



Militant/Cindy Jaquith

Members of a volunteer microbrigade working on housing construction in La Güinera, Havana, February 1990. Such voluntary brigades are part of Che's legacy in laying the political and economic foundations for leading the transition to socialism.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

The opening of the 1990s is a particularly apt moment for the appearance of this French-language edition of *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism* by Cuban author Carlos Tablada. World capitalism is mired in a depression marked by staggering debt, instability of the banking system, and mounting social ills such as rising unemployment, homelessness, and a resurgence of epidemic diseases. Bonapartist and ultrarightist currents rear their heads and grow. Economic and social conditions of working people in Africa and much of Latin America and Asia have declined without letup for nearly two decades. Throughout the capitalist world, class inequalities are widening, social polarization and segregation grow, democratic rights are under pressure, cop brutality is on the rise, and rival national ruling classes are intensifying conflicts with each other and pressing toward new and bloodier wars such as the onslaught against the Iraqi people in 1991.

Since late 1989, moreover, the bureaucratized regimes and Communist parties throughout Eastern Europe and then in the former Soviet Union itself have shattered in the face of irresolvable economic, social, and political crises. The methods of planning and management employed, with this or that variation, in each of these countries were for decades promoted as the only road from capitalism to socialism by the big majority of those in the world who called themselves communists.

The alternative—and irreconcilably different—course advanced by Ernesto Che Guevara during the opening years of the Cuban revolution in the early 1960s is the topic of this book.

The verdict on the so-called Soviet model has now been rendered by history: the USSR and Eastern European countries were moving *away from* socialism, not toward it. Well prior to the events of the last several years, revolutionaries in the government and Communist Party of Cuba had begun to seek ways to combat the accelerating corrosive consequences of the methods copied from the Soviet Union, which had been increasingly applied in Cuba since the early 1970s. In 1986 the Communist Party launched what was called the "rectification process," in response to growing evidence of political demobilization and demoralization among working people in Cuba as a result of these policies. One by-product of this "revolution within the revolution," as Fidel Castro referred to it in November 1987, was a renewed interest in learning about the theoretical and practical contributions of Che Guevara to the building of socialism in Cuba.

Having served as a Rebel Army commander in the struggle that toppled the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in January 1959, Guevara shouldered a broad range of duties over the next six years in the new revolutionary government and its political leadership. During this period the Cuban workers and farmers consolidated their political power and expropriated the domestic and foreign landlords and capitalists. The Cuban toilers and their revolutionary leadership began building a communist party capable of organizing working people to defend their revolution, to aid others in the Americas and around the world starting down the same road, and to begin the transition to socialism. . . .

The enduring political value of Guevara's ideas and example was discussed by Castro at some length at the October 1987 ceremony marking the twentieth anniversary of Guevara's murder at the hands of U.S.-trained troops in Bolivia. Guevara had left Cuba in April 1965 to carry out internationalist missions abroad, with the aim of extending the socialist revolution.

"What I ask for modestly at this twentieth anniversary," Castro said in the 1987 talk, "is that Che's economic thought be made known; that it be known here, in Latin America, in the world: in the developed capitalist world, in the Third World, and in the socialist world." It is with the aim of helping in this task that Pathfinder Press in 1989 published an English translation of Carlos Tablada's book and is now publishing this first French edition. Fidel Castro's 1987 speech, which provides one of the best possible introductions to the place of Che's contributions as a part of the living political continuity of the Cuban revolution, serves as the prologue.

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EDITORIAL

Jail 5 cops who killed Sean Bell!

A Queens grand jury recently indicted three of the five New York cops who fatally shot Sean Bell and wounded Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman. This is the result of one thing above all: the actions of those who protested loudly and visibly in the streets to demand the police be prosecuted and jailed. It was due to pressure by thousands of working people and others—and not the workings of the capitalist "justice" system, which so often has let killer cops go scot-free.

Now we join with others who have taken to the streets since the indictments were issued to demand that all five policemen be charged. Every single shot by each cop—including the officers who fired once or three times—was a criminal act that requires prosecution. If not, police will be emboldened to assume that, while 50 shots might be deemed "excessive," they have a license to fire "a few" deadly bullets. Police association boss Michael Palladino made this clear in his brazen complaint that the charges were altogether unwarranted because they would show that "if you can't get it done in three shots or less, you're in trouble."

Two cops face up to 25 years in prison and one faces up to one year. We join with protesters in demanding that the cops be given the maximum sentences.

Big-business voices, from Republican mayor Michael Bloomberg to Democratic Party city councilmen, will continue to try to demobilize protesters with calls for "calm" and divert them into relying on the courts and capitalist politicians. They argue that the killing of Bell was an "isolated" incident by cops who didn't follow "guidelines" and that the solution is a slap on the wrist and "improved police training" or better "community relations."

These rationalizations cover up the reality that the police killing of Sean Bell, like that of Amadou Diallo in 1999 and of Russian immigrant Anatoly Dimitriev in the Bronx last December, are not flukes. They are simply part of how the cops act on a daily basis as judge, jury, and executioner in working-class neighborhoods. The entire capitalist legal system—police, courts, and prisons—is designed to protect the property and state power of the ruling billionaire class *against* workers and farmers. And that class is represented in the government by the Democratic and Republican parties.

The only reliable recourse that working people have is our own collective action and solidarity. From the earlier rallies demanding the prosecution of the five New York cops to last year's mass mobilizations for the legalization of undocumented workers, these actions are what is needed to defend the interests of the big majority.

Prosecute and jail all the killer cops!

Home loan defaults rattle Wall Street

Continued from front page

rates and fees.

This mortgage racket, which lenders call "subprime," exploded over the past decade—increasing from 5 percent of all mortgage lending in 1994 to 19 percent in 2004.

The financiers who peddled these usurious loans targeted sections of the population that have often been denied credit—oppressed nationalities and the more exploited layers of the working class. At the height of the housing boom in 2004, nearly a third of mortgages sold to Blacks were in this high-interest subprime category, compared to 9 percent of those sold to whites.

At the same time, easy credit and rising real estate values fueled a boom in home ownership. From 1994 to 2003, nearly 9 million households joined the ranks of "homeowners"—increasing U.S. home ownership rates from 64 percent to 68 percent. Of that figure, 1.2 million were Black and 1.9 million were Latino.

Now many can't make the payments. In the fourth quarter of 2006, nearly 18 percent of the subprime mortgage holders were either behind on payments or in foreclosure.

Ruthie Hillary, 70, from Pittsburg, California, was wooed last year by a broker into refinancing her home with a "senior citizen's" loan from New Century Financial. She was promised no payments for several years, her lawyer told the *Wall Street Journal*.

Instead, her monthly payments jumped from $952 to $2,200 a month. By the year's end she faced foreclosure.

New Century, once the second-largest subprime lender, has seen its stock decline from nearly $52 a share last May to $1.66 now, as the defaults mount. More than 24 such mortgage firms have gone belly-up since January 2006.

The "senior citizen" scheme was just one of the expensive loans these outfits promoted.

Others include "interest-only" loans, where the borrower pays only interest for the first few years. A pamphlet the U.S. Federal Reserve issued last year cautions that after the initial honeymoon you may experience "*payment shock*. Your payments may go up a lot—as much as double or triple."

Another scheme starts with a fixed interest rate. After two years the rate changes and a "margin" is added—greatly increasing the payments. Those with bad credit are prime targets for such loans on the promise they'll get a new loan if their credit improves.

The *Wall Street Journal,* which was among the big-business dailies that touted this housing market "miracle" a couple years ago, is now running items like a feature in its March 12 edition headlined, "Why Your Home Isn't the Investment You Think It Is."

"Buying a house with a long-term mortgage is just another form of renting," the paper cautions. "Mortgage interest is rent that you pay to your lender for the use of its money rather than to a landlord for the use of his house."

It added, "Buy at the wrong time—like during the kind of buying frenzy that much of the country has just experienced—and you could end up wishing you had rented instead."

LETTERS

On Sinn Fein and police

In a letter in the February 26 *Militant*, Natan Mosquera raised a series of questions on Sinn Fein's new stance on policing. The Republican leadership team won their role as revolutionaries by leading a decades-long struggle and they have stood up to everything that British imperialism threw at them. On the other hand, a wrong political position taken by the Republican leadership could lead to needless defeats and the postponement of Ireland's reunification for another generation.

Make no mistake about it: the Police Service of Northern Ireland, no matter how reformed, will remain a BRITISH state agency policing part of Ireland, and also, a capitalist force of repression against the working class. In the 26-county state, the Garda remain a capitalist force of repression against the workers and small farmers and there too, Sinn Fein is endorsing the police.

In *State and Revolution* Lenin, drawing on the experience of the Paris Commune and the Russian revolutionary process unfolding before his eyes, taught the Marxist lesson that the workers cannot simply take hold of state power, that they must dissolve the capitalist state and build a new state to defend their rights.

Roy Inglee
Elsmere, Delaware

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Correction

The article "'Guest' workers at U.S. farms superexploited" in the March 26 *Militant* incorrectly identified Lori Elmer as the "chief attorney" of the farm workers' unit of Legal Aid of North Carolina. Elmer is a staff attorney.

Sinn Fein and the police

BY PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—In a recent letter to the editor, Natan Mosquera asked about Sinn Fein's decision to support the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). This decision is against the interests of working people, but is consistent with the Sinn Fein's leadership's evolution.

To maintain its rule after partitioning Ireland in 1920, the British rulers subjected Catholics in the north to discrimination, with the cops enforcing this arrangement. When a civil rights struggle erupted in the late 1960s, the British government imposed a military occupation to repress the rebellious Catholic population. Today London maintains 8,500 troops in northern Ireland.

REPLY TO A READER

In January, cops revealed they had colluded with pro-British paramilitaries in the murder of 10 people in Belfast, giving the killers immunity and blocking searches for their weapons.

As the fight for Irish self-determination unfolded, the slogan "Disband the RUC!" became popular. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was the forerunner of today's police in northern Ireland. Like the RUC, the PSNI is overwhelmingly made up of Protestants. Irish freedom fighters did not just "distrust" the cops, as Mosquera noted, but recognized that they were a part of the state that fought to prevent Irish independence.

Unable to break the resistance, the British government in 1998 signed the Good Friday agreement, which instituted an elected assembly in the north. London was to reduce its military presence and the Irish Republican Army agreed to decommission its weapons, but London has stalled on implementing some of its promises.

London is keen to draw Sinn Fein into administering the new setup, including the cops, and has used the establishment of the assembly to pressure it to this end.

The January Sinn Fein conference adopted a motion to "authorise our elected representatives to participate in local policing structures." British prime minister Anthony Blair applauded the decision as "historic."

The cops have not changed their role. They are not neutral. They defend the system that exploits working people and maintains imperialist oppression and a divided Ireland. The cops that colluded with loyalist paramilitaries were only doing their job—whatever is necessary to back British rule, including organizing executions. This is not limited to northern Ireland: the police killing of electrician Jean Charles de Menezes in London in 2005 was not a "mistake" but part of the cops' role in the British rulers' "war on terror," which includes moves to expand cop detention without trial.

Brutal methods are also used by the cops in the Republic of Ireland, where the capitalist rulers have sought to block any common struggle with fighters in the north. In the 1970s the Irish cops ran a so-called Heavy Gang that beat confessions out of "terrorist" suspects.

As capitalism heads deeper into crisis, the rulers will intensify the use of such methods against struggles by working people. In Ireland these struggles will combine with the fight to end British rule, in which working people and their allies will need to rely on their own actions, not on the institutions of the enemy class such as the cops.

Sinn Fein's decision to back the PSNI is consistent with the course its leadership has been pursuing. This has included reliance on armed actions in the past, in combination with political maneuvers, to reach a negotiated accommodation with the oppressors.

Such middle-class leaderships have been at the helm of other national liberation struggles. They have not proved capable of mobilizing and leading workers and peasants as the backbone of a revolutionary democratic movement that would fight to end imperialist domination, give land to the tillers, establish the right to armed self-defense, and the organization of the working class in order to act in the interests of the producing classes. But that *is* the political course necessary if British rule is to be taken on and defeated in Ireland.

Without clarity on the character of the cops, opponents of British rule will find it difficult to wage an effective struggle for national liberation.